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ABSTRACT

In 1964, the Associated Press, ABC News, CBS News, NBC News, and United Press International formed a consortium called the News Election Service (NES) that was designed to collect one set of election returns for the entire United States. A study was made of NES operations during the presidential election year of 1980 to determine (1) the nature of the structural organization of NES and how that organization enhanced or inhibited information dissemination, (2) how election returns were disseminated on election night, (3) how accurate those returns were, and (4) the potential impact of NES on the electoral process. Data were gathered through participant observation of NES activities and through interviews with NES executives and managers in three different locations. The resulting data revealed that NES is a complex organization that seems to be essential to election returns dissemination. While the television networks and wire services that comprise NES all use its service, they each rely on other means of making early projections of winners in specific races. Although NES strives for complete accuracy, its figures are not always the same as those released by official agencies--largely due to the large number of possible error sources. The NES system raises questions pertaining to influences on reporting that the elimination of competition in data collection has caused. (FL)

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DISSEMINATION OF ELECTION RETURNS INFORMATION: THE NEWS ELECTION SERVICE DURING ELECTION 1980

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He would like to thank the executive director of the News Election Service for his cooperation, as well as for its support. He would also like to thank the College of Journalism at Marquette University for its assistance.

DISSEMINATION OF ELECTION RETURNS INFORMATION:

THE NEWS ELECTION SERVICE DURING ELECTION 1980

Franklin argued that the "crucial role" of the election process in American society has resulted in considerable regulation for fairness and that some of these impinge on freedom of communication.[1] He points to federal legislation as early as 1927 which regulated equal access to the electronic media by candidates, despite the protests of some broadcast journalists. There is, however, concern today about media dissemination of election returns and projections, and their effects upon voting behavior, such as national television and radio reporting of East Coast returns before polls close in West Coast states. The public concern reflected over the projections and concessions made in the 1980 general election underline this point. There is great disagreement over the potential and real effects of election projections and rapid election returns dissemination on major as well as less important regional elections.[2]

In the past two decades, election returns dissemination by the mass media has become increasingly sophisticated. Returns across the nation are being collected, counted, and reported more quickly and more completely than ever before with the aid of improving communications channels. This is exemplified by increased capacity long distance telephone systems and higher quality intra- and inter-computer communication. Faster and more failsafe analytical hardware and software systems are available as well.

A major turning point in election reporting occurred in 1964. It was a landmark year for election returns dissemination for at least

three reasons: First, it was a year of increased speed in collecting national returns by the networks and wire services. It was a year in which the increased speed led to more emphasis on election night analysis of returns. Second, 1964 was the year the networks established permanent, year-round network election units. And third, 1964 marked establishment of an organization which represented a cooperative effort by the three major networks and two major wire services to pool resources and collect one set of returns for the nation.[3] The Associated Press, ABC News, CBS News, NBC News, and United Press International formed a consortium called the News Election Service. Since that election, the organization has served its sponsors through all major elections involving national and statewide races.

The new organization revolutionized election coverage. Bohn notes that in 1960, for example, the major news organizations in New York tabulated about 46 million votes by 1:30 a.m. election night. At the same point in tabulation in 1964, he said the new organization had collected 60 million votes.

Only a few mass communications scholars have concerned themselves with the process of election coverage. The process has serious implications for content of the mass media and performance of government on election night and the days immediately preceding an election.[4]

The News Election Service remains, as Time Magazine has characterized it, a "little-known agency," but is perhaps the single most important non-official election organization in the world.[5] While its work is often overshadowed by attention given projections generated through exit-polling and other procedures developed by the polling and elections units of the networks, its work remains highly significant

since it is the system by which American citizens learn who their new leaders will be prior to announcement of the official tabulations in December.

Even with the changing news reporting emphasis from vote counting to vote analysis that began in 1964, the vote itself still remains a high priority of the major news organizations. Pepper found that during the 1972 election that commentators' summaries of returns generated for 28 to 36 percent of the content of election night network programming. Analysis and discussions during the 1972 election, with one of the widest margins for any incumbent, remained a distant third on the list of network content. Candidate speeches and reports from candidates' headquarters surpassed commentator analysis, but still did not provide the major thrust of the content of the program.[6]

Prior to 1964, the nation depended upon the major wire services, the Associated Press and United Press International, for complete vote reporting from every precinct and ward in the nation. The wire services depended upon their various bureaus across the country as well as their member newspapers and broadcast stations for returns. Bohn observed that the wire services provided returns for radio stations in their coverage of the 1924 election, and by 1928 Associated Press, United Press and the International News Service had organized an estimated 100,000 persons to report returns.[7] Emphasis by the broadcast media had continued to grow so that in 1944 the networks first pre-empted all normal programming on election night to devote attention to election returns tabulation. Just as the creation of NES brought increased attention to analysis, the commitment to full-time coverage on election

night in 1944 turned more attention toward analysis and provided more time for presentation of returns.[8]

Since the decision by the networks and wire services in mid-1964 to pool resources, the nation has had only one organization to provide returns of presidental elections. Fang points out that "(d)espite the electronics, skills of psephological communication rest on a relationship as old as the Republic. It is the relationship of the vote counter and the vote reporter."[9] The News Election Service has taken on this responsibility of organizing the complex network of individuals and technology to bring the returns to the electorate within hours of polls closing.

Brown and Hain labeled the News Election Service a "unique" system of data gathering for our national elections, noting this organization also makes important decisions on which candidates will be covered and "how well" by the national media.[10] They wrote:

> On election night in the United States, interested observers can follow the vote returns on any local radio or television station and can check that vote count in the next morning's newspaper. Few citizens realize, despite occasional references to the News Election Service, that the basic vote totals for president, Congress, and governor presented by all three networks and the two wire services originate from a single source: the News Election Service.[11]

Research Questions

Because of the importance of political information dissemination, this paper addresses the purposes and practices of the News Election Service. In looking closely at NES operation during 1980, this paper will attempt to answer the following research questions:

(1) What is the structural organization of NES and how does this enhance or inhibit dissemination of information?

(2) Specifically, how were election returns disseminated to the electorate on election night 1980?

(3) How accurate were election returns reported by the networks and wire services on election night 1980?

(4) What is the potential impact of the News Election Service on the electoral process?

Method

Data collected in this study were primarily gathered through participant observation. The participant as observer has been widely used as a social science research method and is widely documented in the literature.[12] Field research for this study was conducted in the NES Midwest Area and in the State of Wisconsin office of NES. Research was conducted throughout the fall presidential campaign period, culminating with post-election NES activities in New York City and in Milwaukee.

Furthermore, extensive semi-structured interviews were conducted with NES managers and executives during the fall in Milwaukee, Chicago, and New York. These interviews were used both to validate observational data and to generate additional data for the discussion which follows. Finally, the investigator also was permitted to review various reports and documents produced by the News Election Service for its members and managers. This further validated data gathered in observation and interviewing. The research was conducted at the Wisconsin state office in Milwaukee, at the national manager's conference in Chicago in August 1980, and at the national center for election reporting in New York City in November.

Purpose, Goals and Governance of NES

The News Election Service is governed by a board of one representative from each of the partners. Since each organization is equal partner, each contributes one-fifth of the annual costs of the operation. The board has set the NES purpose to "collect, tabulate, and distribute to its members a single, accurate set of totals for President, U.S. Senate, Governor, and U.S. Representative from all 50 states and the District of Columbia. In presidential years, NES also reports presidential primaries."[13] Goals for 1980 were not easy ones to reach with 34 senate races, 13 gubernatorial races, and all 435 House seats on the ballot in addition to the presidential race. The task was reduced somewhat by NES policy not to tabulate uncontested races or "candidates below the major party level" which are judged unworthy of attention.[14]

A report prepared for ad hoc staff which worked election night stated that NES operates on this rationale:

> When the polls close in a given state, the election is over and decided. We are attempting to unlock the secret of who won in the races of national interest just as soon as possible because the people want to know. The speed with which the system works reflects the desires of the five companies to report a swift, accurate set of numbers to the public.[15]

Because there is no election office or election officials on the national level to rapidly release returns and because of delays in learning official returns from the states, NES has become the unofficial returns source for the world. Cognizant of this, the board has instructed the NES staff to go to whatever lengths are required to achieve the fastest and most accurate numbers possible. The Board of Managers directed a permanent staff headquartered in New York City just

blocks from the offices of the companies which support the organization. The permanent staff is responsible for carrying out the wishes of the board. An executive director reports to the board on activities of NES. Working for the executive director are a director of operations, and approximately a dozen other full-time staff members. Assisting the director of operations are area managers, who supervise return collection in their regions of the nation. Each area manager supervises state managers of approximately ten states.

Each state manager sets up his or her own office and recruits staff for administration at the state level. The state manager will be given a budget, the size dependent upon the state and its reporting needs. In Wisconsin, for example, sufficient staff was hired to open an office during usual business hours Monday through Friday from Labor Day through election day. Other state offices are formally opened over longer periods and employ more individuals. Often, work is completed with part-time assistance from students or similar groups.

Election Day/Night Preparations

The majority of News Election Service work is completed long before the returns begin to be reported to the nation. Months before the election, decisions are made which will influence the returns which reach the screens and newspapers at home. Prior to a November general election, NES executives, area managers, state managers, and permanent staff gather to discuss the system in detail and work out anticipated problems in regions or individual states. After initial planning, a meeting is held in August with lectures, demonstrations, and small group discussions. Also during the late summer months, state and area

managers meet with various civic groups which will serve as reporters on election night to recruit large scale assistance. In some states, public officials, such as county auditors or county clerks, are also recruited. It is important that arrangements be made early since so many individuals are required. Services are provided under contractual agreement.

Meetings are held between state and area managers on location to work out financial arrangements and other budgetary considerations for the fall effort in the late summer. By Labor Day managers at the state level are prepared to organize their states for reporting at three different levels.

Reporters and the Reporting System

The NES system is labor intensive. Without people, it could not work. While the system is dependent upon sophisticated computers, the information is collected by reporters in the field on election night. NES has used approximately 115,000-125,000 persons on election night in recent major elections in attempts to obtain complete precinct-level and country-level vote reporting. This points to the importance of the state managers, who recruit coverage for each of the precincts in their states. In the Midwest, for example, Wisconsin required coverage in about 3,500 precincts, Illinois covered approximately 4,000 wards, and Minnesota covered about 3,000 wards.[17]

Precinct reporters are normally recruited from civic groups, service organizations, or those persons who wish to participate in some fashion in the political process beyond voting. Groups which regularly assist NES include the various local chapters of the League of Women

Voters, high school classes, and groups of college students. These individuals reporting at the precinct/ward level are assigned an individual voting unit and expected to be present when the voting machines, boxes, or other vote counting devices are opened. The precinct reporter's only responsibility to NES is to telephone the results to the regional centers in their part of the country.[18] These persons may also be asked to telephone locations other than a regional center, but their efforts usually require less than an hour and provide NES with an early first wave of returns during election night as polls close.[19]

NES actually counts the votes twice. The ward/precinct reporters form a first level of the reporting. While it is the fastest level of reporting, it is not the most complete. For complete returns, the system depends on its second line of reporters at the county level. While it is impossible in many states to achieve complete precinct coverage, it is necessary for state managers to recruit reliable reporters to work from county election officials' offices to report directly to the national tabulation center in New York with cumulative returns throughout the night until their county is 100 percent complete on returns and the returns have been verified as accurate.

After the first wave of calls from the precinct or ward level has been completed--most are made within the first hour after polls close--the cumulative totals gathered from the same precincts by the county election official begin to catch up with the precinct totals in the NES computers at regional centers (and at the national center). Once a county's percentage of precincts reporting is greater from the county reporter, the ward returns are overridden by the computer in

favor of the county returns. Thus, percentage of wards reporting in a county is the determining factor--and users benefit by having the highest of the two totals reported on teletype printers.

While this might seem like a secure reporting system, it is not sufficient in view of NES. A third level back-up system is maintained in case of problems experienced by the national center computers (which contain the original county level data) or the regional computers (which originate the ward/precinct level data and transmit it through intra-computer channels to the national center). This third level system is maintained in each state.

The base for the national system backup is a group of "pools" which are created on the state level. These in-state pools are actually independent tabulations in each state focusing on the leading races on the ballot. At times, when a pool arrangement is not possible, NES will set up its own third level reporting system. Pools tabulate races at the statewide level for all state races and tabulate district totals for U.S. House of Representative races in each state. The backup system is also required to provide NES with reports for individual counties for these races at the state level. As a protective procedure throughout election night, these third level returns, which are tabulated by on-site computer systems for the state pool, are reported as often as they are produced by an individual representing NES in the state pool center to the national center in New York. However, only state and district totals are reported to New York; county totals remain at the state level and serve as a check against NES totals being received by the state pool. State pools are often operated by the state bureaus of the wire services, either as a solo or joint effort. In Wisconsin, for

example, the pool was created by AP and UPI state bureaus with NES buying in with a share of the pool operating expenses. Pool coverage more often than not includes state and area races which are not reported by the first two NES levels. These races include state races below governor, such as other state offices, referenda, and other more local matters. NES contracts with pool coordinators for shares of expenses on a per state basis.

As Brown and Hain point out, the state pools are not as well funded and lack the expertise of NES in reporting the returns. This, Brown and Hain argue, make the state pools slower on election night. "The pre-existing ad hoc state election organizations, then, were not displaced by NES but were relieved of some of the pressure for quick totals. Most work closely with NES in a supportive function."[20]

Transmission of Election Night Returns

After reporters have done their jobs, activity becomes intensified in the state, regional, and national centers. Reports are provided to members every few minutes beginning moments after the polls close until the state is completely reported in each county or parish. While the largest number of returns are counted before most citizens retire for the evening, the counting continues throughout the night. States begin to complete their tabulations by early morning on Wednesday and most states across the nation are completed by the afternoon of the day after the election. Because of complications, such as communication system breakdowns, transportation problems, local election laws, and other similar delays, some counties may not be 100 percent complete for several days after the election. These instances, fortunately, are

rare, and many states become complete by noon after the election. In several Midwestern states, for example, returns were 100 percent complete in time to meet the mid- and late-morning deadlines of the afternoon daily newspapers on Wednesday.

Most of the mass media receive returns through the wire services. Some local stations will purchase a direct teletype connection from NES and stay ahead of stations which do not,[21] but most depend on the information over their national and state AP and UPI wire services.

The wire services receive returns from the state bureaus and the national bureaus which are given the returns by NES directly by teletype. Months before the election, arrangements are made for installation of telephone lines for these teletype services.[22] The NES system utliizes 1,200 word-per-minute AT&T Model 40 teletype receivers, with several states assigned to a circuit.[23] Summaries of returns during the evening are transmitted for in-state use and for national member use. The NES national center is connected to the New York offices of the five members by special circuits. The national center is separately connected to the state offices in the priority order of President, U.S. Senate, Governor, and U.S. Representative. Statewide totals are transmitted each five minutes, if they have changed, and House totals, are transmitted every ten minutes, if updates have been reported.

NES reports county-by-county totals for each of the four major races. The single exception is the House district which falls entirely within a county, such as in many metropolitan areas. These county-by-county totals are offered every fifteen minutes, varying according to the number of counties in a state and the demand on the

circuit. There are exceptions. In New England, reports are filed by city and town instead of county. This affects the frequency of town-by-town reports, since there are hundreds of cities and towns in any state in New England.[24] Samples of these reporting tables are provided in the appendix. At the precinct level, NES reports about two-thirds of all precints, with some assistance from pools in five states.[25] At the county level, all precincts are reported before NES's job is complete. Throughout the night, the printed output informs members just what proportions of the returns are in at a given time.

Computer tabulation of the returns is completed under the direction of an NES systems manager, who supervises data processing and analysis. The 1980 election system employed twin IBM 370 systems, with each programmed separately in case of failure of the primary system. The systems receive identical data input throughout election night in the national center.

Election Data Processing

How does the set of returns from a precinct in Fayette County, Kentucky, for example, wind up in the national center? It requires first that reporters be in place at the precinct and at the county elections office when the voting machines are opened.

When the returns are made available by the polling site official, the NES reporter immediately telephones the regional center with the figures. These totals are then processed into the regional computer system (in this case in Cincinnati) and the returns are then electronically forwarded to New York. Later in the evening, when the precinct official reports to the county level, returns are added to

county totals. On a regular basis during the evening, the county election official will announce totals to the media representatives, such as the NES county level reporter, who telephones the updated county totals to the national center in New York.

At the national center, the county reporter has been given a special telephone rotary number to reach telephone clerks who are assigned to handle only reports from a particular state. These clerks record the figures on special forms, check them, and submit them to a data entry point in the center. Runners take the forms to operators who keypunch data into the system. The forms then return to the state manager, who has them filed. Output is teletyped to state centers, national members in New York, and the state manager's desk at the national center.

System Safeguards

The first defense against system error is the parameter data base. Early in the fall, state managers contact election officials in each county of their respective states by telephone and mail to determine the latest information about vote registration, anticipated turnout, the current precinct alignments, opening and closing times of polls, returns availability on election night, and other related data. This is ordinarily done through a mail survey questionnaire with follow-up telephone interviewing. These parameters the number of precincts and voter registration are programmed by the national center as a quality control. If a report, for example, is too large for a precinct because a reporter or clerk has transposed digits, the computer will not accept the report because of the parameter data. A state manager or area

manager must verify error reports as accurate before the system will be overridden in favor of the report.[26] Vote total drops, since county reports are cumulative, also cause error messages. The state manager bears total responsibility for ascertainment of accuracy of reports and is frequently in contact with county auditors and county clerks at home to check totals.

The state manager receives considerable help in tracking errors. His or her area manager will often call upon their experience in judging situations not easily solved. Furthermore, a completely separate set of individuals working in the national center, called error editors, often provide the most important help. These individuals are assigned to take all computer error messages from their assigned state and interpret them and attempt to solve them without involving the state manager. Often, mechanical errors, for example, are caught and corrected. These individuals work closely with the managers to resolve problems such as parameter violations.

Two other individuals assisting the state manager are headquartered at the state center. These individuals are the political editor and the state center coordinator. The sole job of the political editor is to review output for aberrations. An astute political editor can spot changes in totals and point them out to the state manager and prevent erroneous reports going undetected for long periods at a county level which may affect the leader in a close race. The state coordinator is normally an experienced political reporter, with background in previous elections and a familiarity with voting patterns in the state. His work with the pool manager and the political editor helps to resolve local problems.

The teletype system is thoroughly checked in October to make certain circuits are prepared and printers operating. Installations of equipment begin in early October and testing occurs in mid October on Tuesdays and Thursdays at a regular hour. Testing is conducted daily during the last full week prior to the election.

A full system rehearsal is scheduled on the Saturday prior to the election to reduce human error. State managers arrive in the national center a day or two prior to the rehearsal for briefings and orientation sessions and to prepare for the rehearsal. Hundreds of New York area college students arrive on Saturday to learn procedures for their election night positions as telephone clerks, runners, and other assistants in the center. Supervisors are briefed. County reporters in all counties of all states have been instructed by mail and telephone and are paid to participate in the rehearsal. These reporters have been given instructions to telephone twice at scheduled times with artificial data to test the system. As it would work on election night, the rehearsal gives all individuals involved a chance to learn their jobs without making costly errors on election night. While the national center is busy the entire day, an individual state will rehearse for about two hours. Afterward, the state manager debriefs his or her staff of clerks and assistants and then telephones all county reporters who failed to participate in the rehearsal or had other problems which need to be solved. The trouble-shooting should be completed by early Tuesday--giving the manager about 48 to 72 hours to solve last-minute problems. Precinct/ward level reporters are the only individuals not participating in the rehearsal. State centers are also checked by the state manager's designated state center coordinator. During the same

weekend the national center is rehearsing, computer systems for the state pools are tested for problems. By Tuesday, all problems should be solved and the system will be ready for the returns, which begin to come in from eastern states with the earliest closings of polls.[27]

"Unofficial" Returns and Their Accuracy

NES strives for totally accurate reporting of the night's returns. But because of numerous possible sources of error, including those originating in the offices of election officials of the various counties which remain undetected until days after the election, the NES figures are not always the same as the figures released by the state election board, commission, secretary of state, or other official source. A look at one state may serve as an indicator, however.

In Wisconsin, where NES reported races for President, U.S. Senate, and nine races for U.S. House, official figures were reported in late November 1980. Table 1 indicates the statewide variations in the 11 races which ranged from 0.00004 percent to 0.083 percent for 23 major candidates in the 11 races.

Insert Table 1 about here

Errors originating at the source of the election returns are often the most difficult to detect and correct. During the tabulation of the

TABLE 1

COMPARISON OF OFFICIAL AND NES RETURNS IN WISCONSIN

Race, Candidates	Final NES	Official	Difference
President			
Carter	988,255	981,584	+0.006%
Reagan	1,089,750	1,088,845	+0.0008
Anderson	159,793	160,657	-0.005
U.S. Senate			
Kasten	1,101,669	1,106,311	-0.004
Nelson	1,061,899	1,065,487	-0.003
U.S. House District 1			
Aspin	126,331	126,222	+0.0009
Canary	95,960	96,047	-0.0009
U.S. House District 2			
Kastenmeier	142,031	142,037	-0.00004
Wright	119,435	119,514	-0.0007
U.S. House District 3			
Baldus	126,797	126,859	-0.0005
Gunderson	131,581	131,001	-0.003
U.S. House District 4			
Zablocki	144,572	146,437	-0.013
Honadel	60,578	61,027	-0.007
U.S. House District 5			
Reuss	129,509	129,574	-0.0005
Bathke	37,366	34,267	+0.083
U.S. House District 6			
Goyke	98,616	98,628	-0.0001
Petri	143,992	142,980	+0.00008
U.S. House District 7			
Obey	162,010	164,340	-0.014
Vesta	89,134	89,475	-0.004
U.S. House District 8			
Monfils	81,474	81,043	+0.005
Roth	169,296	169,664	-0.002
U.S. House District 9			
Benedict	56,040	56,838	-0.014
Sensenbrenner	204,972	206,227	-0.006

Sources: News Election Service data, November 5, 1980, and the Wisconsin State Election Board, Madison.

returns of the U.S. Senate race in Wisconsin between incumbent Gaylord Nelson and Robert Kasten, the eventual winner, for example, an error was detected in the Dane County Clerk's office which actually swung the race from Nelson to Kasten. At that point in the counting, Nelson held a slim lead. But after detecting negative rolloff, that is, more votes cast in the senate race than in the presidential race, a potential 10,000+ vote error was checked with the county clerk. The error was found in the clerk's totals and Nelson's total was reduced to reflect correction of an addition error in Madison. Kasten's lead was never surrendered after the correction.

Discussion

While the networks and wire services have combined to create NES, and these organizations use the NES data as their "official" returns on election night, each has other means of making early projections on the winner of specific races at the national as well as regional and state levels.

NBC, for example, has an exit-polling organization which is in the field on election day to rapidly enable reporters and editors to analyze voting in key races. The NBC News Polling and Elections Unit uses exit poll results as a supplement to the base of data generated by NES as part of its election night reporting. Each of the major networks and wire services has its own system for predicting the outcome by using selected sample precincts much in the same manner a pre-election survey would be conducted.

The networks and wire services use the election data collected by NES in any fashion they choose, and the members may report it in

whatever form they desire at any time after the information is released to members.

NES is a complex organization which seems essential to election returns dissemination. It provides a service for the citizen seeking to learn the names of winners from a rapid and reliable source. While it is unofficial, NES, like the organizations it represents, has an important impact on the election process even before the election occurs. Months before elections, critical judgments must be made about races to be covered and candidates to be listed and counted in each of the races. These decisions can often make or break an upcoming minor party candidacy--especially during primary election seasons such as spring 1980. And of course, the ramifications of election night coverage itself are important to the minor parties which hope for the national publicity to continue growth of their organizations to a point where they can compete with the two major parties in the nation.

For mainly technical reasons, NES must eliminate names of certain candidates. For example, in Wisconsin, where there were ten candidates for President on the official ballot, NES decided only to report the totals of five--Carter, Reagan, Anderson, Commoner, and Clark. Computer output format prevented reporting totals for all ten candidates. Thus, as Brown and Hain conclude, NES has the task of deciding early in a race on the "serious" candidates for office. They wrote:

> In some states the ease of getting on the ballot as a candidate for president or senator would sometimes require NES to deal with up to a dozen presidential candidates if it were not selective. An increase in the number of vote totals reported also increases likelihood of errors, especially errors of transposition, and decreases the chances of accurate reporting of the votes received by the candidates likely to win. Furthermore, reporting vote totals for minor party candidates hampers the speed of the entire reporting process, one of the major demands on NES.[28]

When NES does not report the totals of a candidate, such as one who is not on the ballot of all states, or even a large number of them, the figures are collected and recorded by the state pools, and made available to state media through the pools and the AP and UPI state wire services. Brown and Hain conclude that this approach is logical, but still is "one more important factor among many which bias the American political system in favor of the established contenders."[29]

NES state ballots go through a number of changes before the Board of Managers arrive at final versions. Primary elections, naturally, have one major influence on the ballot in each state. Prior to the Wisconsin primary, September 9, 1980, for example, a draft ballot was set. With no changes caused by the primary results, a tentative ballot was set which included nine presidential candidates, five senate candidates, plus two to three candidates in each of the nine congressional races. A revision, called the firm ballot, was processed in late September, adding a presidential candidate and modifying affiliations of a senate candidate. The final ballot is also determined in late September to permit time for printing of reporting forms.[30] On this form, the five major presidential candidates are listed in order they will appear on the teletype and for computer coded circuits. The input order for the computer system is also included by party -done in early August by consensus of the Board of Managers--for systematic reporting from the field.

The NES system raises questions pertaining to influences on reporting that elimination of return collection competition has caused. Certainly the competitive dimension of election reporting is not gone--it has simply shifted to projection. But would competitive

systems lead to improved speed and accuracy even beyond the level attained by NES? Study of potential and current government impact upon reporting of election returns must also be reviewed in the context of the NES system and comparable pool systems at the state level. What would standardization of the voting period nationwide, a proposal receiving some attention, mean to return collection and dissemination?

We should look ahead to the development of new election reporting technology and its potential influences on vote reporting and tabulation--both officially and unofficially. How will this change reporting for elections in 1982 and 1984 as well as subsequent major election years? Will new voting systems influence the process of collecting and disseminating returns?

References

1. Marc A. Franklin, "Freedom and Control of Communication," in Ithiel de Sola Pool and Wilbur Schramm, eds., Handbook of Communication, Rand McNally College Publishing Company, Chicago, 1973, pp. 902-03.

2. Ibid., p. 903.

3. Thomas W. Bohn, "Broadcasting National Election Returns, 1952-76," Journal of Communication, 30:4 (Autumn 1980), pp. 146-47.

4. Reporting to each state is done by the county or parish clerk/auditor to a state election board or the state official in charge of elections such as a secretary of state. In most cases, the maximum time permitted for transmission of this information is 30 to 45 days.

5. "By the Numbers," Time Magazine, Vol. 107, April 19, 1976, pp. 86-87.

6. Robert Pepper, "Election Night 1972: TV Network Coverage," Journal of Broadcasting, 18:1 (Winter 1973-74), pp. 31-36.

7. Thomas W. Bohn, "Broadcasting National Election Returns: 1916-48," Journal of Broadcasting, 12:3 (Summer, 1968), pp. 271-73. See also Alfred Balk, "What Happens to Your Ballot on Election Day?" Today's Health 42:11 (November 1964), p. 35.

8. Bohn, "Broadcasting National Election Returns: 1916-48," p. 279.

9. I. E. Fang, "Watching the Votes Being Counted," Journalism Quarterly, 46:4 (Winter 1969), p. 803.

10. James Brown and Paul L. Hain, "Reporting the Vote on Election Night," Journal of Communication, 28:4 (Autumn 1978), pp. 137-38.

11. Ibid., p. 132.

12. For example, see Eleanor E. Maccoby and Nathan Maccoby, "The Interview: A Tool of Social Science," in Gardner Lindsey, ed., Handbook of Social Psychology, Vol. I, pp. 449-87, Addison-Wesley, Cambridge, MA, 1954. See also Fred N. Kerlinger, Foundations of Behavioral Research, Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, New York, 1973; and see Kenneth D. Bailey, Methods of Social Research, second edition, Free Press, New York, 1982.

13. News Election Service, 1980 General Election System Description, mimeographed system manual for members, October 1980, New York, N.Y. See Part I, "NES System Description," memorandum dated October 3, 1980, p. 1.

14. Ibid., p. 2. About three dozen House seats were uncontested.

15. News Election Service, unpublished mimeograph report, November 1, 1980, New York City, NY.

16. For example, the Midwest Area includes Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. The area is headquartered in Chicago with the area manager residing in West Lafayette, Indiana. State managers, for the most part, reside in or near a major metropolitan area of their respective states.

17. As a matter of comparison, New York State covered approximately 9,200 of its 14,000 precincts, and Pennsylvania covered 7,800 of its 9,500 precincts. Several states, such as Hawaii, Nevada, and other Western states, did not report precinct level returns because of the lateness of the size of the states. County level returns were used instead.

18. Regional centers for precinct/ward level reporters during 1980 were located in Chicago, Cincinnati, Dallas, and New York.

19. For an excellent discussion of the work of election night reporters, see I. E. Fang, "Watching the Votes Being Counted," Journalism Quarterly, 46:4 (Winter 1969), p. 807.

20. Brown and Hain, p. 134.

21. Ibid.

22. Most often, the NES state center is located at the same site as the state pool. For Wisconsin, for example, the two centers were in the same facility, maximizing communication and transmission of returns.

23. Teletype equipment is set up with a code selector such that when a state on a circuit is transmitting returns, that state only receives them. Thus, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, and Wisconsin, which were on Circuit D-27, did not receive data other than their own states from the system in New York.

24. For additional details, see the News Election Service 1980 General System Description, mimeograph manual for members, October 1980, New York, N.Y. See Part III, "1980 General Election Transmission System," July 18, 1980, pp. 1-5.

25. Estimated precinct/ward coverage during the general election for 1980 was for NES to cover 103,509 precincts/wards, with assistance from state pools in Illinois, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Utah of 11,805 precincts/wards, or a total of 115,384 of the estimated 176,137 precincts/wards in the 50 states. This is approximately 65.5 percent of all voting units.

26. A particular problem in some states during the 1980 election was higher than anticipated turnouts. In Wisconsin, where there is no advance voter registration because of liberal voter registration laws, most county election officials underestimated turnout and parameters were violated late in the evening as counties began to become complete. Each county in violation of expected turnout had to be contacted individually with verification made.

27. At 6 p.m. (E.S.T.) in Kentucky, New Hampshire, and Indiana.

28. Brown and Hain, pp. 137-38.

29. Ibid., p. 138.

30. Ballots source was the Wisconsin State Election Board, Madison. NES made its decisions based on ballots obtained from Madison.

APPENDIX

WISCONSIN NES TELETYPE REPORTS FROM 1980

WICX
a0150
d p bc-wi-g-pres-sm 11-5 0502

Wis Pres 3,341 of 3,448 - 97%
Carter D 957,301 - 44%
Reagar R 1,049,658 - 48%
Anderson I 155,892 - 7%
Clark B 29,193 - 1%
Commoner Z 7,651 - 0%
0502 1105

Presidential summary, 97% complete

5:02 a.m. (EST) November 5, 1980

WICX
a2150
d s bc-wi-g-sen-sm 11-5 0502

Wis Sen 3,352 of 3,449 - 97%
Nelson D 1,032,433 - 49%
Kasten R 1,073,033 - 51%
Larson B 9,008 - 0%
0502 1105

Wisconsin Senate summary

WICX
c0650
d h bc-wi-g-congr-sm-006 11-5 0937

Wis House 6th 374 of 374 - 100%
Goyke D 98,716 - 41%
Petri R 142,992 - 59%
0937 1105

Wisconsin 6th District U.S. House summary, 100% complete

9:37 a.m. (EST) November 5, 1980

WICX
d0150
d h bc-wi-g-congr-tb-001 11-5 1121

Wis House 1st

County	P	PP	Aspin	Canary	Jackson
Green	8	8	1,291	1,077	8
Jefferson	1	1	402	232	10
Kenosha	56	56	33,330	19,049	387
Racine	65	65	43,310	33,131	699
Rock	67	67	33,071	25,533	825
Walworth	41	41	14,929	16,938	227
Total	239	239	126,331	95,960	2,156

1121 1105

Wisconsin 1st District U.S. House county table, 100% complete

11:21 a.m. (EST) November 5, 1980

Presidential County-By-County Table, Wisconsin (partial)

KICT
t6150
d p. bc-wi-c-pres-tb 11-5 1119

Transmitted 11:20 a.m. (EST)
November 5, 1980

Wis Pres County	P	FP	Carter	Reagan	Anderson	Clark	Commoner
Adams	20	20	2,713	3,304	318	17	10
Ashland	29	29	4,769	3,252	695	125	108
Barron	43	43	8,647	8,788	867	277	57
Bayfield	37	37	3,717	3,704	541	148	84
Brown	58	58	29,782	46,957	4,581	1,147	204
Buffalo	23	23	3,276	3,569	404	144	16
Burnett	24	24	3,197	3,428	389	112	22
Calumet	19	19	5,036	7,885	1,064	272	13
Chippewa	47	47	9,841	10,531	1,160	331	28
Clark	53	53	6,091	7,923	662	390	16
Columbia	49	49	8,715	10,477	1,373	332	51
Crawford	32	32	4,392	3,939	342	106	35
Dane	140	140	85,560	57,445	19,772	2,295	2,866
Dodge	69	69	11,972	18,376	1,693	484	33
Door	27	27	4,960	7,170	655	154	27
Douglas	37	37	11,703	7,553	1,700	400	47
Dunn	35	35	7,843	7,429	1,565	235	87
EauClair	52	52	17,527	17,374	3,486	389	99
Florence	3	3	948	1,187	86	31	6
Fond Du Lac	79	79	18,413	25,601	2,404	438	115
Forest	13	13	2,124	2,104	211	63	9
Grant	67	67	10,751	13,960	1,408	388	117
Green	39	39	6,594	8,704	740	133	21
Green Lake	26	26	4,202	5,265	1,957	364	50
Iowa	29	29	5,476	6,093	1,405	290	45
Iron	17	17	2,865	2,504	311	125	19
Jackson	21	21	5,411	6,911	652	272	28
Jefferson	52	52	20,980	27,035	3,659	588	56
Juneau	20	20	3,739	4,595	403	212	17
Kenosha	38	38	15,390	15,992	491	152	31
Kewaunee	22	22	5,503	6,533	494	190	42
La Crosse	18	18	3,293	5,034	429	140	22
Lafayette	21	21	11,390	19,244	2,456	515	59
Langlade	32	32	3,172	3,193	355	124	34
Lincoln	33	33	12,944	23,213	2,654	551	30
Manitowoc	125	125	46,601	80,761	9,778	1,393	145
Marathon	53	53	6,402	12,539	1,084	234	43
Marinette	28	28	2,990	5,575	335	144	22
Marquette	56	56	24,203	34,286	4,799	959	137
Menominee	72	72	15,133	19,287	2,022	533	2
Total	3,448	3,443	988,255	1,069,750	159,793	29,245	7,721
Milwaukee	275	293	144,915	90,380	18,269	2,135	965
Suburbs	159	143	63,999	79,632	12,962	1,272	271

1126 1125